

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 42 and 47 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Please amend Claims 41, 43 to 46 and 48 to 52 as shown in the attached Appendix.

The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

41. (Amended) A communication network comprising a plurality of node devices, wherein a first node device of said plurality of node devices comprises:

B1 a plurality of buffers for storing a signal received from each channel of a plurality of input channels;

a switching means for altering an output channel connected to each buffer of said plurality of buffers in accordance with a predetermined pattern in order; and

C1 a control means for controlling in order to deviate a timing when a switching means of an adjacent node device connects a first buffer and a first output channel of the adjacent node device, from a timing when said switching means of the first node device connects a first buffer and a first output channel of the first node device, in accordance with predetermined information output from another node device.

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C5 43. (Amended) The communication network according to claim 41, wherein said predetermined information is a pattern wherein a signal input from one input channel is not simultaneously output to a plurality of output channels.

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44. (Amended) The communication network according to claim 41,
wherein said predetermined information is communicated by a control packet.

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45. (Amended) The communication network according to claim 41,
wherein said predetermined information is communicated by a data packet for
communicating data.

46. (Amended) A node device, comprising:

a plurality of buffers for storing a signal received from each channel of a
plurality of input channels;

a switching means for altering an output channel connected to each buffer of
said plurality of buffers in accordance with a predetermined pattern in order; and

a control means for controlling in order to deviate a timing between when a
switching means of an adjacent node device connects a first buffer and a first output
channel of the adjacent node device, from a timing when said switching means of the node
device itself connects a first buffer and a first output channel of the node device, in
accordance with predetermined information output from another node device.


48. (Amended) The node device according to claim 46, wherein said

predetermined information is a pattern wherein a signal input from one input channel is not
simultaneously output to a plurality of output channels.

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~~49.~~ (Amended) The node device according to claim ~~46~~⁵, wherein said predetermined information is communicated by a control packet.

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~~50.~~ (Amended) The node device according to claim ~~46~~⁵, wherein said predetermined information is communicated by a data packet for communicating data.

^{B3 cont}
51. (Amended) A communication control method for a communication network comprising a plurality of node devices each having a plurality of buffers for storing a signal received from each channel of a plurality of input channels and each having a switching means for altering an output channel connected to each buffer of said plurality of buffers in accordance with a predetermined pattern, in order, the method comprising the steps of:

 a communication process for communicating predetermined information among the plurality of node devices; and

a control process for controlling in order to deviate a timing when the switching means of adjacent node devices from among the plurality of node devices connect a respective first buffer and a first output channel.

52. (Amended) A control method for a node device having a plurality of buffers for storing a signal received from each channel of a plurality of input channels of the node device and a switching means that alters an output channel connecting each buffer